I am honored to be one of the three presidents hosting this annual dinner. I want to express my appreciation to the Alumni Association for putting on this wonderful dinner where we can celebrate our pride in Georgia Tech and see and greet old friends. A number of you whom I had not seen in a while told me tonight that I was “looking good.” For that I am grateful, but I remember an older gentleman once telling me, “When I was young, people used to say I was good looking, but then after about age 40 they started saying I was looking good. I was never good looking after that.” I think there is a message in there for all of us.

Tonight, as this good-looking crowd assembles here, we can bask in the pride of being associated with a university that is ranked among our nation’s very best, number eight among public universities according to U.S News and World Report. Digging deeper into the rankings, you can learn that our peer institutions rank us among the nation’s top 25 in reputation regardless of public or private status. Considering that there are thousands of universities and colleges in our country, this is remarkable. As we say in my home part of the state of Georgia, “Who’d have thunk it.”

We have achieved this elevated status now so often that sometimes I think we take it for granted. So, how did it happen? After all, we are a state school that receives the same level of support as any other state school. Why did we not follow the path of least resistance and be content with a status of being good, but not great? We may all have different answers to this question, but I would suggest it lies in who we are as a community of students, faculty, alumni and friends. Tech people don’t cotton to the notion of just being “good.” We aspire that Georgia Tech will be one of the top institutions, not just because we are competitive, and we are that, but because we know we have a higher mission to serve. It is a mission embedded in the knowledge that we have something unique and special to offer, and one that is imbued with a commitment to service to our students, our state, our country and people, here and abroad. This has not changed in our 122-year history. It may sound simple, but it is a fact that surprisingly few outside of the Tech clan can understand. Our core belief is so strong that those who would seek to distract us by putting their own agendas ahead of what really counts, quickly find that we are a family of one, and we will not be deterred.

In rising to the challenge of making Georgia Tech one of our nation’s and the world’s great universities, each of you here tonight have made a difference. Giving at the level of the Leadership Circle shows your support for Georgia Tech’s vision to be the defining technological university of the 21st century. Your gifts help provide us with the resources we need to offer a great Tech education to our outstanding students while allowing us to discover the knowledge that will underlie the future. But our impact goes well beyond our campus.

Recently we conducted a comprehensive study of Georgia Tech’s economic impact – it showed that Georgia Tech has $4 billion annual impact on Georgia’s economy and that we generate 45,000 jobs for Georgia citizens. The findings demonstrated that Georgia Tech is the key to the success of our state’s future in the face of global competition.
At the national level, Georgia Tech is now seen as a player in policy issues, from economic competitiveness to energy, from global warming to health care. For example:

- We continue to expand our focus on health in new areas that will revolutionize health care:
  - In nanomedicine our efforts led to the winning of 3 national centers of excellence from the National Institutes of Health in one year, a stunning accomplishment.
  - To optimize use of the vast information from the human genome through the new field of systems biology, we recently worked with IBM to build one of the world’s most powerful computers and hired Dr. Jeff Skolnick and his team of 19 colleagues to join us from New York to do this exciting work.
  - In the remarkable new field of predictive health and personalized medicine we are working with Emory to position us as one of the first movers in the world.

- In the important area of energy and sustainability our stock is rising. With energy consumption projected to triple by end of this century, energy independence becoming more critical to our nation’s security, and access to new sources of clean energy becoming vital to the future, we are seeking ways to find alternative energy sources and reduce demand. Our Strategic Energy Initiative is increasingly allowing us to be a leader in this dynamic area, providing energy while reducing man’s carbon footprint.

- Our partnership with Emory becomes more robust through our goal to improve human lives through the “Global Safe Water” initiative. By 2025, 5.7 billion people will live in areas where water will be scarce or unsafe. To tackle this intractable problem we will use technology to provide safe water supply in areas of the world where this is critical.

Georgia Tech research increasingly is found at the leading edge. Consider that this year alone we:

- Developed the fastest chip in the world with IBM.
- Created a 3-D solar cell that captures all light that strikes it (make solar energy more efficient, effective).
- Invented a tiny nanogenerator that gleans energy from sources like blood flow, mechanical vibrations, and ultrasonic waves.
- Flew a fully hydrogen-powered airplane.

Hundreds of the nation’s employers once again ramped up their efforts to hire our graduates to fill the needs of a poorly stocked scientific and technological manpower cupboard. Only two weeks ago we held our largest commencement exercise in history. Our Ph.D graduation speaker, Dr. Ray Orbach, Undersecretary of Energy, said it well: “Our nation needs individuals with your talents and training if we are to meet the challenges ahead… You have been blessed with inquisitive and intelligent minds. Combined with the blessings bestowed upon you by this remarkable institution, you have been empowered to change the future of our world for the better.”

Another view on graduation that struck a chord with me, and likely with some of you in this audience, came via a letter I received from “A proud parent of a Georgia Tech alumnus.” It read, “My wife and I attended the graduation ceremony to witness our son’s receiving his BS degree in
aerospace engineering after eight years of study! I am writing to express my deepest, deepest
thanks, appreciation and gratitude to Georgia Tech and to everyone who helped and enabled my
son to get his degree; who stuck by him, encouraged him and gave him opportunity after
opportunity to complete what he had begun. I frankly thought the school would long ago have
invited him not to come back, but it did not. Instead it accommodated his needs and allowed him
to study at his own pace so he could finish his degree. I promise you I will always have the
fondest and most grateful feelings towards Georgia Tech and I will contribute what I can each
year. I will even remember Georgia Tech in my will! Who said Georgia Tech does not have a
heart!”

Speaking of our students, they are outstanding. This year they:

- Added to our totals of elite scholarships by winning Goldwaters and Fulbrights.
- Won Campus MovieFest’s Grand Finale Nation’s Best Picture Award for the movie
  “Fanya Kaplan” with the all Tech student acting ensemble speaking in Russian. Check it
  out on our website.
- Created an amazing solar house for the Solar Decathalon competition on the National
  Mall in Washington DC this fall.
- Built houses and playgrounds in New Orleans and Mississippi as 600 Tech students
  worked over winter and spring breaks to help Katrina victims.

Our athletes were not to be outdone. If you’re not following spring sports at Georgia Tech, you
are missing lots of excitement:
- Women’s tennis team is now No. 3. They stopped Stanford’s 89-match winning streak to
take national championship in indoor tennis, then captured their 3rd straight ACC title.
  They have now advanced to Sweet 16 in NCAA Tournament.
- Women’s softball won 53 games, landing in the top 20 and the NCAA Tournament,
  which begins this weekend.
- NCAA Golf Tournament also begins this weekend; Georgia Tech is the No. 5 seed in
  East Region. Roberto Castro, 3-time All American, is a finalist for Byron Nelson Award,
given to nation’s top senior in golf.
- Finally, our crew team won 1 gold and 3 silvers at the Dad Vail Regatta

Campus continues to evolve to reflect our goal to define the technological university of the 21st
century, with the opening of the Klaus Advanced Computing Building and the Molecular
Science and Engineering Building. Under construction is the amazing Marcus Nanotechnology
Building, which continues on track for completion in mid 2008. And we completed the
innovative 5th Street Bridge/Park, which complements Technology Square. The next project –
take over and improve the Olympic residence halls along North Avenue at Downtown
Connector.

Paralleling all of this progress, our academic program rankings confirm Georgia Tech has
momentum:
- Engineering in the top 5
  - ISyE #1 for 17th straight year
  - 9 disciplines in top 10
• Management leaped up to #25 from #34; top 10 public university business schools (2 years ago, leaped from 40s into 30s)
  • Physical chemistry, discrete math, applied math, environmental policy all moved into the top twenty programs.
  • And, of course, our alumni are among the very best in giving among public universities.

I join you in celebrating that No. 1 alumni ranking tonight and thanking all of you for making it possible.
  • We could not accomplish all we have without your Roll Call gifts.
  • The Leadership Circle of Roll Call a very special group. As Janice said, you make up only 6 percent of Roll Call donors, but you provide half of the funding.
  • Georgia Tech is a very exciting place to be, thanks to your generous contributions. I want you to know how much we appreciate your support.

In closing, I recently visited our sister institution Virginia Tech, where I knew victims of their tragedy, to participate in a memorial service. As they deal with the issues of that terrible event, I have been struck by the strong sense of community and unity of that campus and its community. They really know that they are part of something bigger than themselves, something they love. For me this reinforced the importance of institutions like universities in providing stability, staying power and conveying strength in our society. I get that same sense each time I come to a President’s Dinner – strength and unity in shared affiliation with Georgia Tech. I am proud to be a Ramblin’ Wreck from Georgia Tech and a member of the Yellow Jacket family.